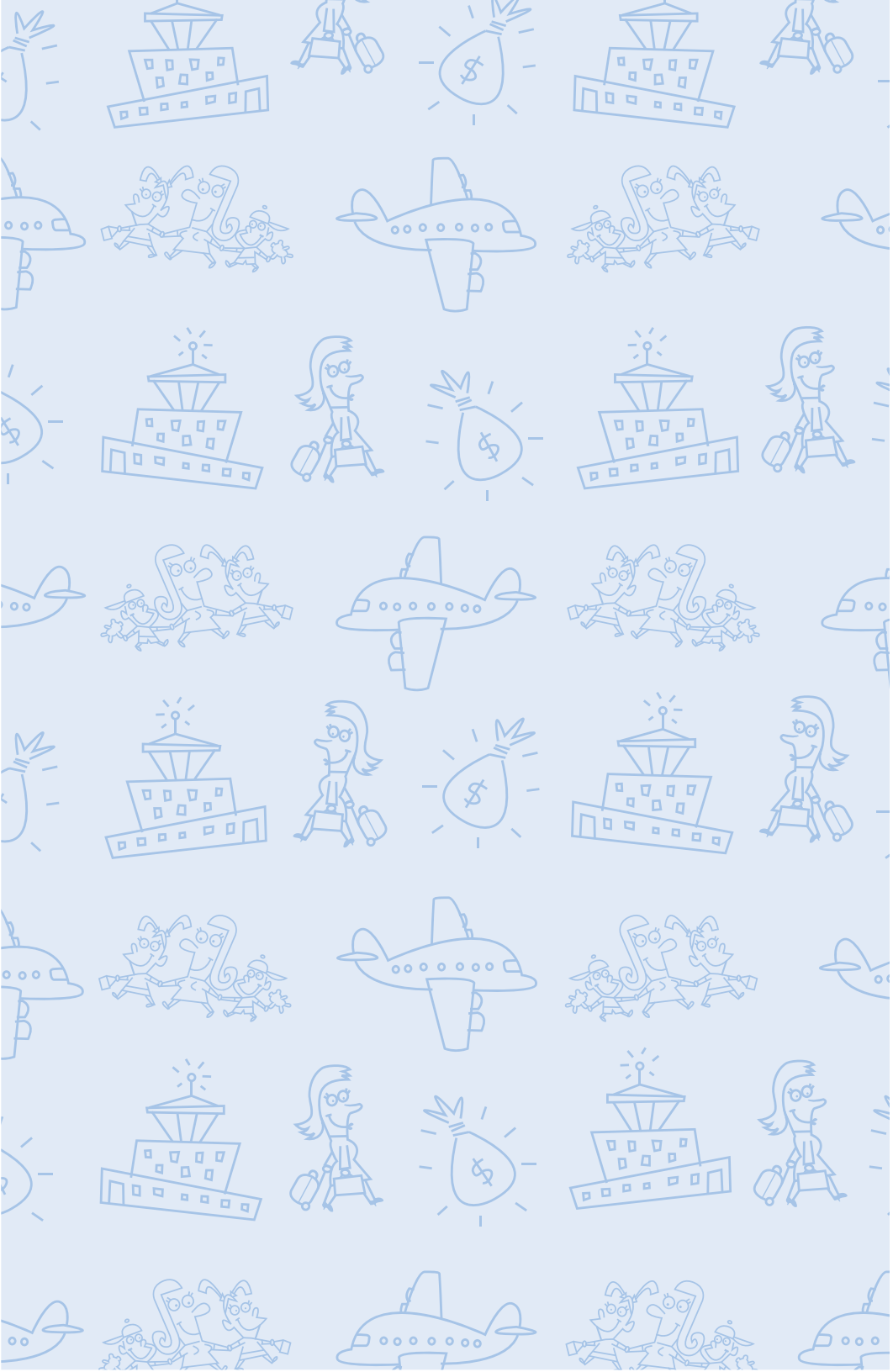
Protecting the Bay Area's Aviation Resources

The Land-Use Connection

Regional Airport Planning Committee
April 2005



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Association of Bay Area Governments

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SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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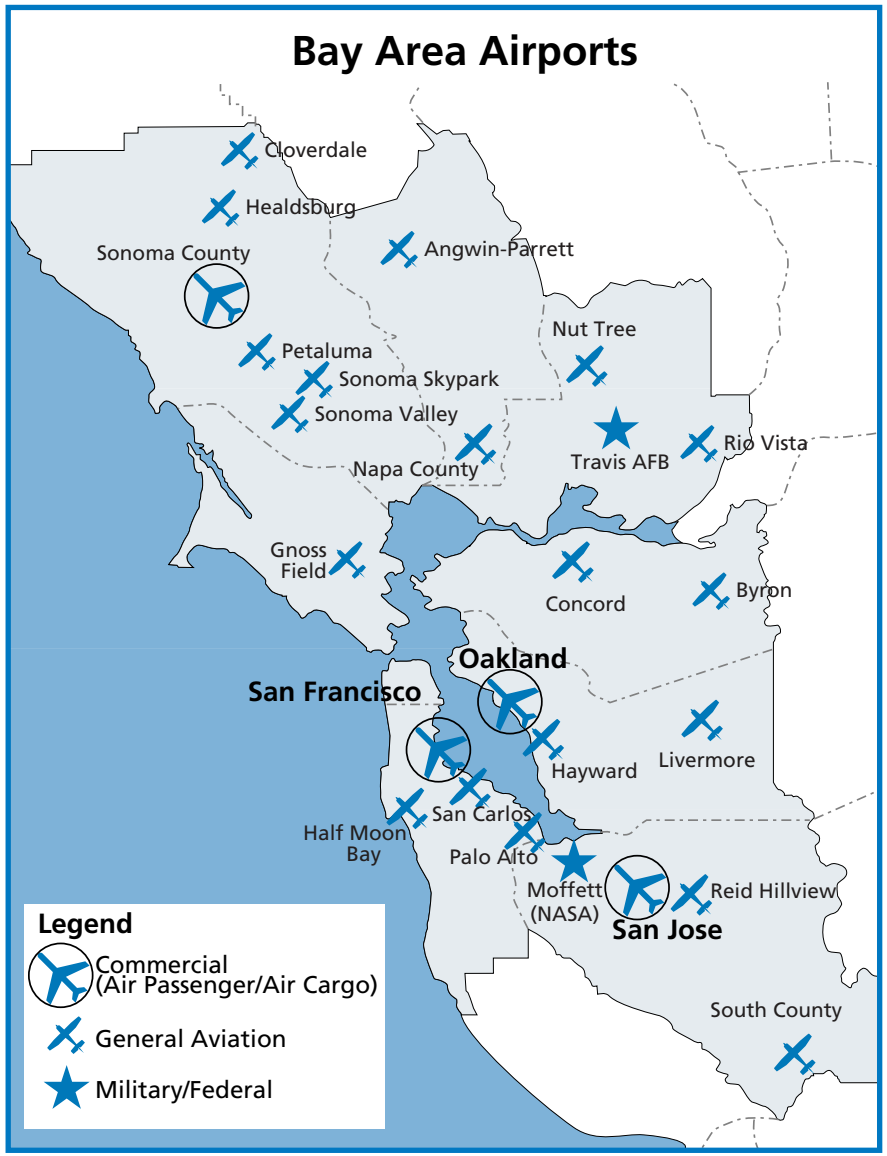
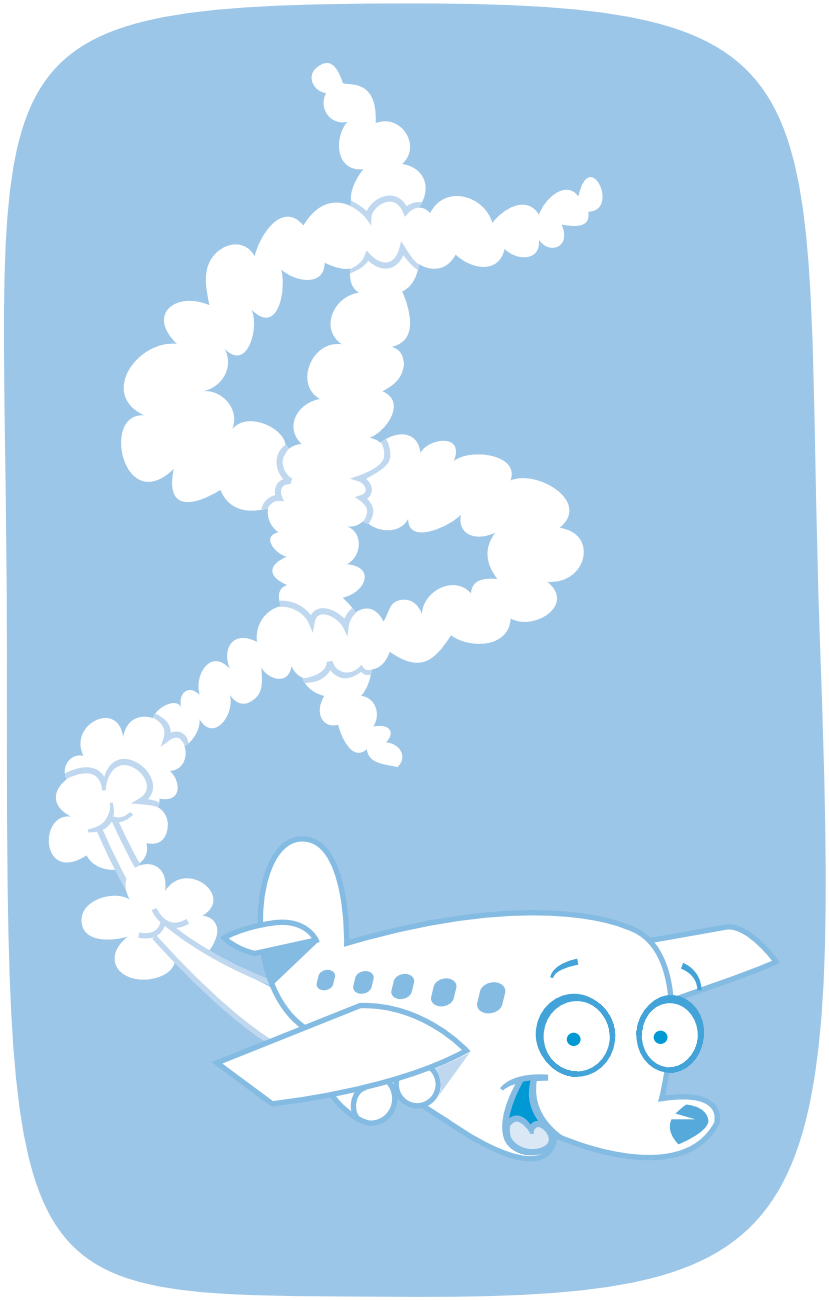


Introduction

Appropriate land-use planning around airports is a shared responsibility involving local governments, county airport land use commissions and the public. This guide is intended to serve as a resource for the general public and elected officials who will be addressing future land-use proposals near airports. It explains why airports are, and will continue to be, important to the Bay Area and provides a "checklist" of key questions local decision-makers and the public should consider when evaluating new land uses for compatibility with established airport noise and safety criteria. The guide also lists key sources of information and contacts to help make informed decisions.

The Bay Area is home to some 23 airports that serve commercial and general aviation users. This regional airport system forms an integral part of the Bay Area's transportation network by providing links to communities throughout the United States and abroad. Because of the growing demand for aviation services in the Bay Area and difficulties encountered with past airport improvement plans, it is essential that the capacity of existing airports be preserved. Bay Area communities, faced with accelerating housing and economic needs, are increasingly having to make difficult decisions concerning the amount and type of new development to allow in and near airport flight corridors. Development that is not compatible with aviation activity, due to noise or safety factors, may strain airport and community relations as well as create long-term operational problems for the airport. Thus, land-use decisions by local governments have become inextricably linked with the future of aviation in the Bay Area.

This guide has been prepared by the Regional Airport Planning Committee, an advisory committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and Association of Bay Area Governments. The committee is charged with addressing the long-term aviation needs of the Bay Area and addressing regional environmental issues associated with serving projected aviation demand.



Why Airports Are Important to the Bay Area

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

A comprehensive economic study of the Bay Area's three major commercial airports in 1999 attributed nearly 470,000 Bay Area jobs — roughly one in seven jobs — to workers connected to the airline industry as well as workers providing services to business travelers and tourists from outside the region (i.e., jobs with airlines, the airport itself, airport concessions, airport ground transportation, air freight forwarders, hotels and restaurants, etc.). One new startup airline to be headquartered in the Bay Area announced it would create 1,500 new jobs and pump millions of dollars into the local economy.

The region's only remaining military airport, Travis Air Force Base, is the largest employer in all of Solano County, with 15,000 military and civilian workers. The Moffett Federal Airfield complex, supporting NASA's Ames Research Center and Lockheed's aerospace operations, employs thousands of workers in the South Bay and is helping to keep the Bay Area in the forefront of the aerospace industry. In addition, numerous other jobs are provided by the region's 20 general aviation airports, including airport staff, businesses on the airport, and the police, fire and other emergency services that use these airports.

Bay Area airports also provide job training opportunities for people who are planning to become pilots, aviation mechanics, or work in the fields of airport management/ operations, and air traffic control.

Jobs Attributed to Bay Area's Three Major Airports, 1999(1)

Airport-generated jobs	51,170
Indirect/induced jobs due to airports	43,440
Visitor-related	373,590
Bay Area total:	**468,200**

A Boost to the Economy

These aviation-generated jobs create over $1.8 billion in personal income for Bay Area residents. When all the revenues derived from aviation products and services are tallied up (i.e., airline tickets purchased, shipment of air cargo, rental car income, hotel/motel income from visitors, etc.), they totaled over $37 billion in 1999 [1]. Highlighting the importance of airports in bringing visitors to the Bay Area, $17 billion of these revenues was the product of visitor spending on such items as lodging, meals, entertainment and ground transportation during their stay. Visitors using the Bay Area general aviation airports, such as tourists to the northern Wine Country, have similar spending patterns, but estimates of these revenues are not available.

The airports also boost the economy by playing a central role in the freight industry, allowing rapid shipment of air cargo ranging from high-value electronic products to perishable agricultural goods, to small catalog items purchased over the internet. Air cargo will continue to expand as more and more companies turn to shipment by air to avoid transportation delays, keep inventory and warehousing costs down, and better meet the demand for seasonal products or products that have a short shelf life. An economic study by Caltrans[2] estimated that the value of air cargo shipped through the Bay Area's three commercial airports in 2000 was $46 billion, about 16 percent of the value of all US air exports.

San Francisco International Airport plays a primary role in overseas air cargo shipment, due to the large number of international routes flown out of this airport, and Oakland International Airport is a regional freight hub for the largest domestic air freight operator in the country. Together, the Bay Area's commercial airports handle some 1.5 million tons of domestic and international freight and air mail each year.

Travel Convenience

Of course, the primary reason for airports in the first place is to allow people to travel for business, vacations, family gatherings, school and other types of trips. Bay Area commercial airports provide access to the national and international aviation network, with direct flights to over 70 domestic and 30 international cities, and serve 55 million air travelers a year.

General aviation airports handle about four times as many flights as the commercial airports, and over half of the flights have destinations outside the immediate airport area (i.e., are not local training flights). Typically people use general aviation for purposes similar to a private car — to visit friends and relatives, make business trips, commute to a distant job, or take recreational trips (see sidebar "Faces of Bay Area General Aviation"). About 75 percent of the nation's airline passenger activity takes place at only 30 major airports around the country. The nation's 5,400 smaller general aviation airports not only allow travelers to avoid these crowded airport hubs, but also extend the reach of the nation's air transportation system.

The Business Advantage

In today's competitive business world, there is no substitute for face-to-face contact. Twenty-five percent of Bay Area air travelers list business as their primary trip purpose[3]. The Bay Area's airports allow business leaders in the fields of computers, biotechnology, telecommunications and higher education to travel frequently and stay in the forefront of their fields. More and more, business travel is not just conducted using the scheduled airlines, as a number of

Faces of Bay Area General Aviation

- Paul B. uses his helicopter to avoid commuting to his company on a pair of the state's most congested highways (I-580 and I-680).
- Rich R. lives in Durango, Colorado, and uses his aircraft to commute weekly to his workplace in the Tri-Valley area.
- Ron D., Mike G., and seven other aircraft owners, fly their aircraft for U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary patrols, ranging from the Monterey seashore to the northern California state boundary.
- Ken B. transported several loads of wheelchairs in his private jet as a donation to several needy countries.
- J. Smith donates her aircraft and time to "Angel Flights of America" to fly patients and their families free of charge to hospitals for medical treatment. She has also flown organs to transplant recipients with last-minute notice.

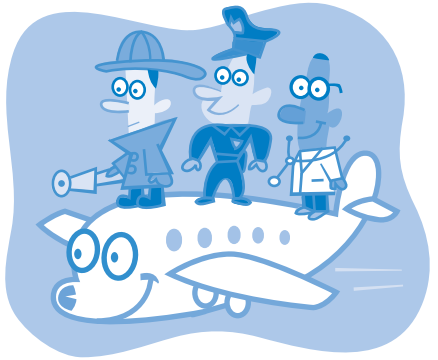
corporations own and operate their own aircraft. This allows busy managers to get to their plants and customers quickly while avoiding delays and the hassle of today's crowded airport terminals. Many other individuals purchase general aviation aircraft for business use as well. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) surveys show that 26 percent of general aviation aircraft are used exclusively for business, while 60 percent of all general aviation aircraft are used partially for business.

Financial Contributions to Local Governments and School Districts

Under current federal law, most revenues generated on the airport must stay on the airport. This enables airports to be self-supporting, rather than relying on local government general funds. Still, local governments and school districts derive financial benefits from aviation activity through taxes on fuel, possessory interest and property. Statewide these taxes total approximately $250 million a year, with about $100 million going to the state and $150 million going to cities, counties and school districts[2].

Indirect benefits to local governments come from the taxes paid by workers in the aviation industry on retail purchases and property taxes and from taxes paid by visiting air travelers to the Bay Area (estimated to be some $2 billion a year) which flow into local government coffers[1].

Communities having an airport nearby also may benefit when companies needing access to aviation services make decisions about where to expand or relocate. Businesses located near airports also can provide an additional economic boost to a community by maintaining and enhancing property values in these areas.



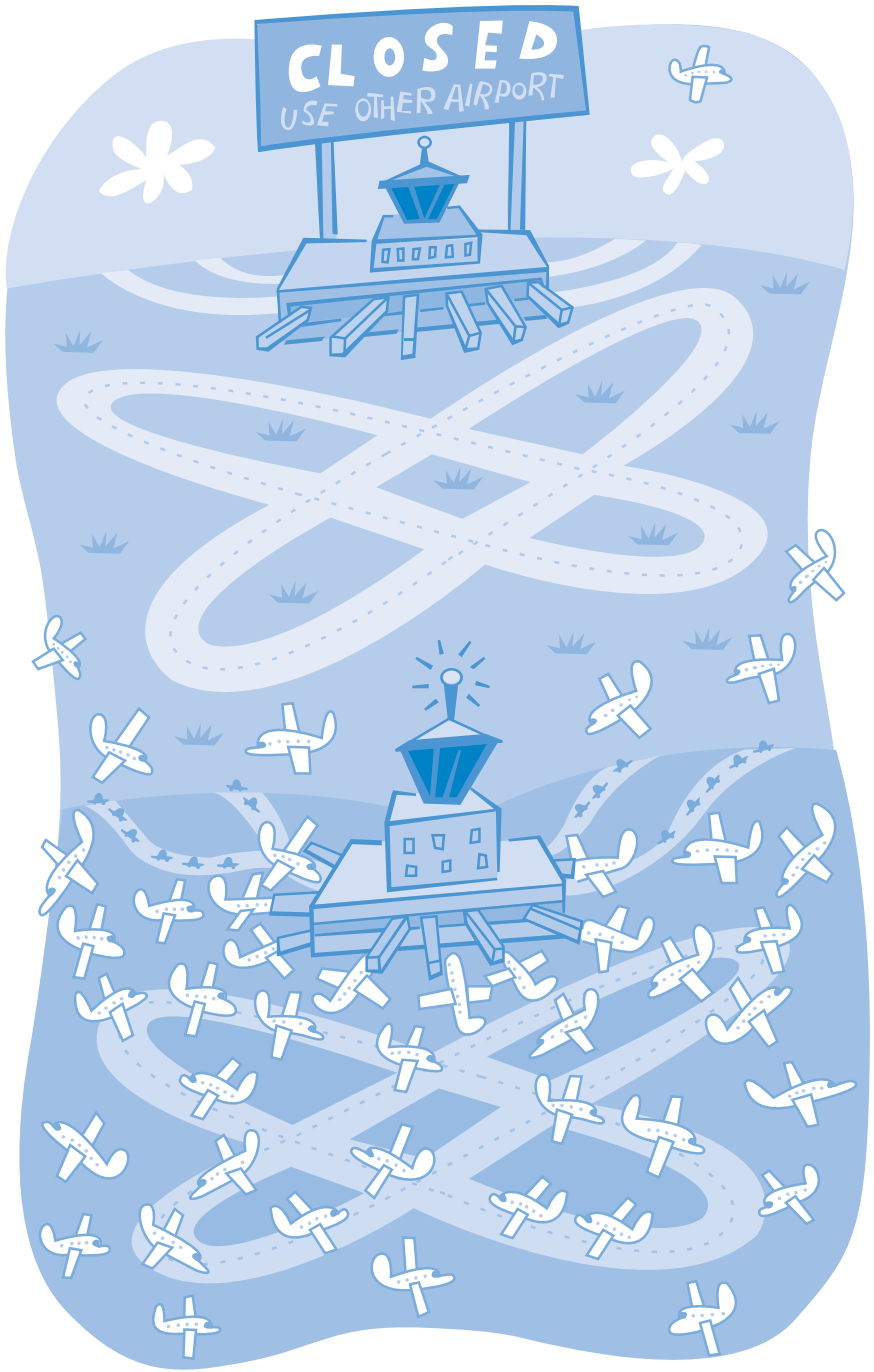
Public Safety and Other Services

Airports are valuable assets when it comes to protecting life and property, as local governments have increasingly recognized the value of aviation in responding to crime, fires and medical emergencies. When the next major earthquake hits the Bay Area, the commercial and general aviation airports that are not damaged will almost certainly be heavily used to deliver critical medical and emergency supplies to local communities. Bay Area airports currently provide the following public services:

- law enforcement
- fire protection
- lifeline medical services and organ transport
- aircraft used to fight forest fires
- search-and-rescue aircraft
- real-time traffic surveillance and reporting

Airports and Open Space Preservation

As urban land is developed and then redeveloped to satisfy the Bay Area's changing housing and economic needs, maintaining adequate public open space and preserving natural resources will continue to be important to the overall quality of life in a community. Airports provide a natural island of open space because of the large amount of land required for their runways and runway safety zones. Cities have put this protected land to good use by creating community facilities with low intensity uses and recreational facilities like parks and golf courses. Typically, community traffic impacts associated with a general aviation airport are considerably less than if the same land were developed for multi-family residential housing, an office park, or a retail shopping mall.



Consequences of Not Protecting Airports

Past experience in the Bay Area and elsewhere shows that building a new airport or improving the capacity of existing runways is a long and resource-intensive process, with unpredictable outcomes. Individually, a single local land-use decision may have only a negligible impact on an airport, but the cumulative effect of a series of poor land-use decisions over time could lead to increased public pressure to restrict airport activity or even close the airport (as has been suggested for several smaller airports in the Bay Area). Good land-use compatibility around airports is the chief means available today to protect the future capability of the Bay Area's existing airports.

Although closure of any of the region's large commercial airports is unlikely, the potential addition of new residents or tall structures near these airports is a continuing concern. More at risk are the region's general aviation airports, which perform the bulk of the work in handling smaller aircraft that would otherwise tie up operations at the larger commercial airports, resulting in prolonged and frequent flight delays. Closure of any airport could have a domino effect, as the aircraft and their flight operations are relocated to airports in other communities that may not have planned for their presence or may not have appropriate land-use controls in place for the increased level of activity.

The Impact of Airports on Communities

As the Bay Area airports have grown, communities surrounding these airports have also been exposed to more impacts from intensified aviation use. Some of the more noticeable impacts, noise and smoke from older aircraft engines, have been addressed through technological means — aircraft engines today are much quieter and cleaner than in the past due to aggressive federal regulations. Aircraft noise, both near and further away from airports, will likely continue to be the most noticeable and vexing impact of airports into the foreseeable future. Through FAA funding, some Bay Area airports have been able to help local homeowners insulate their homes to reduce interior noise from aircraft flying overhead. Further progress in the noise arena will depend on a number of ongoing discussions between the airports, the FAA, airlines and the public concerning possible changes to current aircraft noise standards, to aircraft flight paths, hours of airport operation, runway use, etc. These changes typically require FAA approval and are limited by federal legislation in their scope.

While aircraft engines do produce emissions that contribute to smog, the Bay Area's few days with poor air quality are largely due to motor vehicles and industrial sources. Further reductions in emissions from aircraft engines will depend on EPA action, since aircraft engines are not subject to state or local control. A portion of the emissions from aircraft engines contain toxic air contaminants (just as automobiles do), which are a known health concern and which are receiving more attention as to their localized impacts.

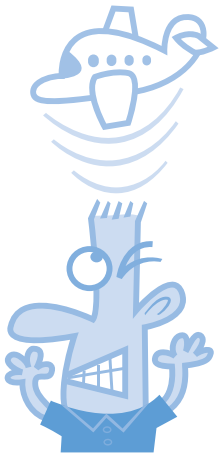
Finally, a central issue that will affect a number of communities throughout the Bay Area and has not been resolved is where, when and how to provide new runway capacity to serve expected aviation growth. Potential solutions include new runways at existing airports; a new airport at a more remote location; or a series of incremental airfield and technological improvements to boost the capacity of existing runways — which will help but probably not solve predicted future runway capacity problems.

Key Questions to Ask When Evaluating New Land-Use Proposals Around Airports

Airport land-use decisions have often triggered vigorous debates between airport users and local communities. Initiatives to reduce the impacts of airport operations on local communities can take a number of years to accomplish because of legal and other considerations. On the other hand, land-use changes near airports can occur relatively quickly and have an immediate impact on an airport's operating environment.

Maintaining good land-use compatibility in the airport environs requires that three critical areas be addressed — noise, safety of persons on the ground, and safety of persons in the air. When presented with a new land-use proposal near an airport, local governments have several options: avoid the problem (do not approve a new incompatible use), mitigate the problem (approve with conditions), or change the underlying conditions (consider a change in type and location of development or in airport operations). As discussed later, there are a variety of places people can go to get more information on these issues.

Protecting People From Aircraft Noise



Aircraft noise can be annoying because it interferes with regular indoor and outdoor activities, and in cases of very high noise levels, can be harmful to health. Different types of land uses and activities will present different airport noise compatibility issues. While most of the ongoing airport noise mitigation programs focus on areas closest to airport runways, noise problems also can occur at some distance from airports under busy flight corridors.

Key questions local officials and the public should ask when reviewing new land-use proposals around airports are listed below:

- Is the proposed land use considered noise "sensitive" (e.g., residential, schools, hospitals, libraries, etc.)?
- What are the existing ambient noise levels in the area from non-aviation sources?
- What are the expected aircraft noise levels in the area, based on current and projected airport activity?
- Is the development in an area where noise levels could exceed the California airport noise standard (65 CNEL, or community noise equivalent level)? How many new people would be exposed to higher levels of aircraft noise?
- If the proposed development is not in an area exceeding the state airport noise standards for cumulative noise exposure, is it under one of the main flight paths used by aircraft for landings and takeoffs?
- Can the indoor noise levels be mitigated to an acceptable level through construction techniques (sound insulation, double-paned glass, etc)?
- Should a noise easement (the right to make a certain level of noise) be granted to the airport operator as a condition of approval for the proposed development?
- Is the proposed land use in an area subject to a state-mandated buyer awareness program, requiring potential home buyers to be notified of the property's proximity to an airport?
- Has the developer of the property been informed of the airport land-use compatibility considerations early on in the development process, and if an EIR is required for the project, has the lead agency used the Caltrans *Airport Land Use Planning Handbook* for its evaluation of future noise impacts as required by state law?

Protecting People on the Ground From Crash Hazards

To protect people from injury, development is almost always restricted off the ends of an airport's runways where the risk of a crash or emergency landing is greatest. Other safety areas further away from the runways may also need to be protected, due to known risk factors. Appropriate questions for reviewing new developments in or near airport safety zones include:

- Is the development in a defined "safety zone" for the airport's runways?
- If not in a defined safety zone, is the new land use under the flight path used by aircraft for landings and takeoffs? Have there been any prior aircraft accidents in this area?
- How many people will be located in the proposed development, and what will the intensity of use be (i.e., will large numbers of people be concentrated in a small area?)
- Has the developer of the property been informed of the airport land-use compatibility considerations early on in the development process, and if an EIR is required for the project, has the lead agency used the Caltrans *Airport Land Use Planning Handbook* for its evaluation of future safety impacts as required by state law?

- Can the design of the proposed development be modified for improved safety through the position and structural design of buildings, location of parking lots and type of landscaping?
- Would approval of the proposed development raise liability issues for the approving jurisdiction due to increased safety risk for people on the ground?
- If the proposed development is in a high safety risk area, should the land instead be acquired by the airport to prevent future incompatible development?

- Are there any future plans to modify airport flight patterns that would have an effect on the positioning of safety zones?

Protecting People in the Air

The erection of a single tall building or other tall structure in the wrong location can compromise use of an airport during visual or instrument flying conditions and endanger aircraft occupants. Tall trees or vegetation near the airport can pose similar problems, as can radio and TV towers that are some distance from an airport. Appropriate questions for reviewing tall structures near airports include:

- What is the height of the proposed building or structure in relation to established FAA height limitations around the airport?
- Has the local planning staff alerted the potential developer of the applicable height limitations in the airport area?
- Has the developer submitted the necessary project notification form to the FAA and received a "determination of no hazard"?
- Would approval of the proposed development raise liability issues for the approving jurisdiction due to increased safety risk for people in the air?
- Should the height or design of the structure be modified to conform with FAA height or project-specific limitations?
- Should an easement specifying structure height limits be granted to the airport operator as a condition of development approval?
- Are there any future plans to modify airport flight patterns that would have an effect on allowable heights for structures in the vicinity of the airport?

Other Land-Use Considerations

Land fills and bodies of water that attract birds can create safety problems, since aircraft bird strikes are a well known occurrence in aviation and have caused crashes and extensive damage to aircraft. New developments that produce glare or have unusual lighting can also distract pilots. Therefore, key questions are:

- Will the proposed land use attract birds?
- Will the proposed land use produce unusual lighting effects that could distract pilots?

The Final Decision

Airport land use commissions (ALUCs) have developed land use compatibility plans for all of the Bay Area airports, but it is up to local jurisdictions to implement and enforce the recommendations in these plans through their General and Specific Plans, zoning regulations, development approval conditions, real estate disclosure notices, etc. Under state law, local jurisdictions may override an ALUC plan recommendation with a 2/3 vote, but in doing so they must document facts supporting the override decision and must inform both Caltrans' Division of Aeronautics and the local ALUC of the findings supporting the override action.

When the city or county making the airport land-use compatibility decision is the same as the jurisdiction that owns the airport, the jurisdiction should review conditions on past grants from the FAA for airport improvement projects that may require the local jurisdiction to maintain compatible land use around the airport. Other jurisdictions also should be cognizant of potential liability issues in overriding ALUC plan recommendations.

It is not likely that airport land-use compatibility decisions will become any easier in the future. By preparing this guide, the Regional Airport Planning Committee encourages local government leaders and the public to:

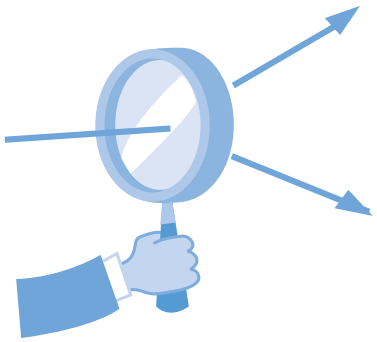
1) review General Plans, Specific Plans and zoning regulations for consistency with ALUC plans, and revise as necessary;
2) consider the checklist of key land use compatibility questions;
3) use available information resources to evaluate the compatibility issues;
4) engage stakeholders in a forthright and open dialogue about the future impacts of the potential new land use on the airport;
5) search for reasonable compromises when they are available; and
6) in the end, make a careful and informed decision that ensures that the interests of both the aviation community and the local community will be well served in the future.

Where to Go for More Information

Airport land-use compatibility decisions are rarely black or white, but fortunately there is abundant guidance on this topic and a number of places local planners and the public can go for more information.

County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) Staff

First, check with the county airport land use commission staff. The ALUC is charged with preparing and updating an *Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan* for each airport. New development may be subject to ALUC review; however, the process varies by county. ALUC plans will delineate areas of critical concern from an airport noise and safety standpoint and provide guidelines for review. A list of ALUC contacts is included in the Appendix.



Airport Staff

Airport staff are well versed in FAA and state requirements for operating an airport safely and in methods for analyzing airport noise impacts. Airports periodically prepare and update an airport master plan that identifies future aviation needs and recommends facility improvements to serve these needs.

Caltrans

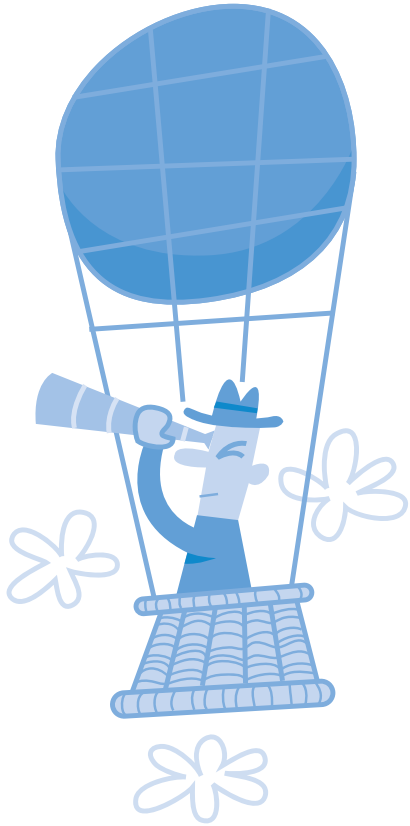
Caltrans' Division of Aeronautics staff have served as advisors to local governments for a number of years, particularly with respect to the state's airport noise standards, as well as for other airport land-use compatibility issues. Caltrans is also charged under state law with reviewing proposals for locating schools and state buildings near airports. To help ALUC staff and other local planners evaluate new land-use proposals for areas near airports, Caltrans has prepared a comprehensive resource guide called the *Airport Land Use Planning Handbook*. The Handbook is simply guidance and is not intended to carry the force of law or regulation.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

The Federal Aviation Administration is charged with ensuring the safety of persons in the air and managing the national airspace. Only the FAA can make decisions about aircraft flight patterns and airspace safety. The FAA administers federal regulations setting forth height restrictions in the vicinity of airports and notification requirements for proposed buildings and other structures that may pose a potential hazard to air navigation.

Regional Airport Planning Committee

The purpose of the Regional Airport Planning Committee (RAPC) is to assess the ability of the region's air carrier and general aviation airports to serve projected growth in air passenger, air cargo and general aviation activity. The Committee evaluates alternative strategies for addressing this growth and forwards suggestions to the airports and FAA for consideration in their planning processes. In its periodic evaluation of the Bay Area's future aviation needs, the Committee reviews a variety of regional issues related to airport development including runway and airspace capacity, surface transportation needs, air quality, aircraft overflight noise and potential impacts of airport improvements on the Bay. The staff of RAPC have knowledge of regional aviation capacity issues, institutional roles and relationships in airport planning, and airport environmental and land-use compatibility issues.



Appendices

References for Economic Data Used in This Report

(1) *Air Transport and the Bay Area Economy(Phase 1)*, Bay Area Economic Forum, February 2000

(2) *Aviation in California: Benefits to Our Economy and Way of Life*, Caltrans Division of Aeronautics, June 2003

(3) *Air Passengers from the Bay Area Airports, 2001 and 2002*, prepared for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission by Charles River Associates and Polaris Research and Development, September 2003 (with minor revisions February 2004)

Contacts

Airport Land Use Commissions (ALUC)

Alameda County
Staff Contact: Cindy Horvath
Phone: (510) 670-6511
Community Development Agency
224 W. Winton Avenue, Room 111
Hayward, CA 94544
E-mail: cindy.horvath@acgov.org

Contra Costa County
Staff Contact: Lashun Cross
Phone: (925) 335-1229
Community Development Department
651 Pine Street
4th Floor-North Wing
Martinez, CA 94553
E-mail: lcros@cd.cccounty.us

Marin County
Staff Contact: Jeff Rawles
Phone: (415) 499-6548
Public Works Department
3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 304
San Rafael, CA 94903
E-mail: jrawles@co.marin.ca.us

Napa County
Staff Contact: Nancy Johnson
Phone: (707) 253-4417
Conservation, Development and Planning Department
1195 Third Street, Suite 210
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San Mateo County
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Santa Clara County
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Staff Contact: Ronald Glas
Phone: (707) 784-3170
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675 Texas Street, Suite 5500
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Staff Contact: Bob Gaiser
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2755 Mendocino Avenue, Room 203
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Airport Contacts

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Buchanan Field and Byron Airports
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FAX: (707) 451-8529
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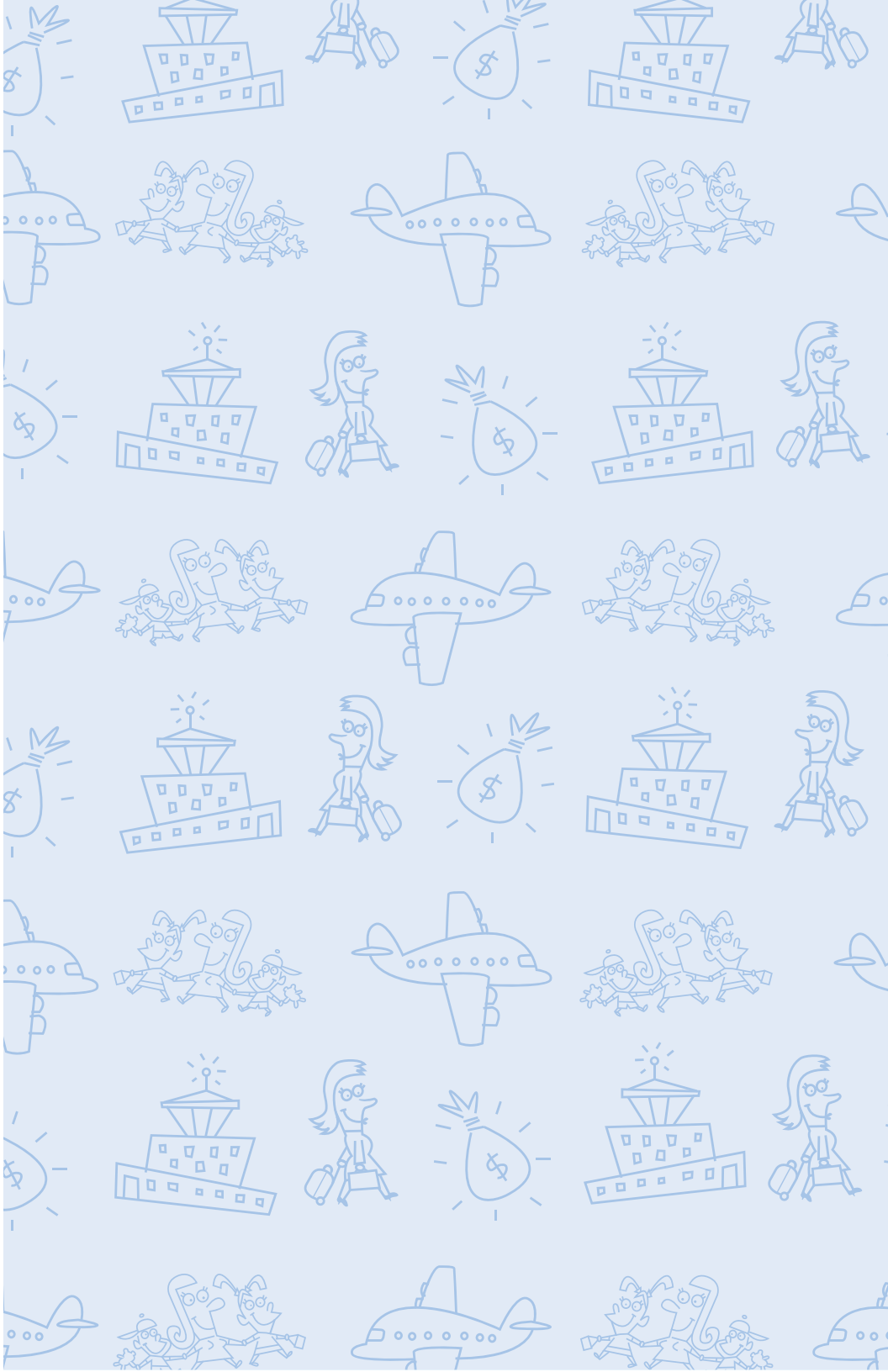

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